## Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser

## **Out of the Attic**

## Alexandria's electric railway

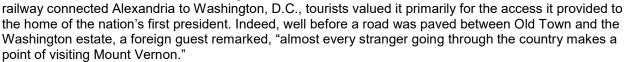
Alexandria Times, August 16, 2018

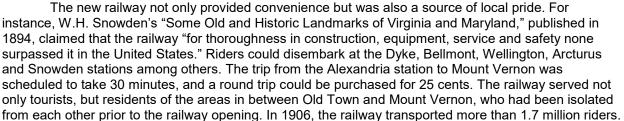
Image: Electric Railway station. Library of Congress

s Alexandrians spend their August vacations in destinations near and far, perhaps now is a good time to reflect on Alexandria's role as a tourist destination through the years. The proximity of Mount Vernon to Washington, D.C. meant that Alexandria always received plenty of visitors, but this influx of tourism increased as transportation technology improved. One of the key aspects of increased tourism to Alexandria at the end of the 19th century was the opening of the Electric Railway between Old Town and Mount Vernon.

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The railway opened between Old Town and Mount Vernon in 1892 and expanded services to Washington in 1896. While the





Trains left the Washington station twice an hour, and the last trains reached the ends of the line at 12:30 in the morning. Snowden paid particular attention to Arcturus station, since it was the one closest to his residence as Andalusia. The trip from Arcturus to Mount Vernon was four miles each way, a trip which he describes romantically:

"the eye may trace out the National Capital, with its towering dome and obelisk, sitting superbly enthrowned in the mist and dimness of the far away hills to the north; and the grand old river flowing down in its seaward course through its setting of green slopes and plains and wooded crests gives to all the view a charm and beauty not often surpassed."

The popularity of automobiles meant that the railway stopped service between Alexandria and Mount Vernon by 1930 to make way for the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The rest of the system ceased operation in 1932. Before that though, the operation of the railway helped the growth of the Del Ray, Rosemont and St. Elmo neighborhoods, which were later annexed by Alexandria. They're a legacy that's survived the railway by more than 85 years.



"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.